

63rd PLACE SOUTH MEETING NOTES - MARCH 7, 2009



On March 17, 2009, City of Auburn staff met with residents of the 63rd Place South Neighborhood in the home of Karen Darrow to discuss their interest in establishing a Block Watch.

Staff in Attendance: MAYOR PETE LEWIS, COMMUNITY SERVICES MANAGER DUANNA RICHARDS, ASST. POLICE CHIEF BOB KARNOFSKI, POLICE COMMUNITY PROGRAMS OFFICER ANDY GOULD, EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS MANAGER SARAH MILLER, TRANSPORTATION PLANNER JOE WELSH AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY LIAISON ALEXANDRA DAVIS

Community Members in Attendance: SCOTT AND TERRY KEALOA, JAMMA DICKSON, SUE AND JEFF MCGUIRE, KIM KIRKLAND AND MYRON LEWIS, JOHN AND JANET ELVERSTON, KAREN NEWTON, JEANNIE JONES, RUDOLF AND FONG ZUMMACK, GEROGE AND DEBRA MARLENEE, CHRIS WENGER AND WENDY MEYERS, PAT HAMIL, NORM AND MAGGIE CRUZ, ED AND DELANA COLES, DAN AND MONICA ORSINI, KEN AND BUAPHUN MULLINS, NATHAN AND JAIMI JACKSON, CARINA MESKEL, JOHN AND TERRI CALNAN, KAREN AND JIM DARROW AND SHAAON FINLEY

Welcome and Introductions

Mayor Pete Lewis welcomed everyone, thanked them for attending and asked City staff to introduce themselves. Mayor Lewis then indicated the primary purpose of the meeting was for the City to listen to the residents' concerns, respond to questions they could answer immediately and identify items for follow up. The City takes notes of the meeting, which are then sent out to the attendees.

Mayor Lewis facilitated the meeting and discussed the following topics:

- ***Mayor's Update*** -- residents were encouraged to sign up for the Mayor's Update, an e-newsletter Mayor Lewis sends out every Friday about what's taken place in the City during the week, upcoming events, etc. He also uses the listserv to send out alerts about road closures, emergencies, etc. as a way to keep the community informed. Since this is a listserv, if you decide you don't want to continue receiving it you can unsubscribe at any time.

Development Related Questions/Comments

- Residents have concerns about the noise levels in the early morning hours caused by machines moving dirt which is connected to development taking place at Omega Baja off 292nd. Residents were encouraged to call 9-1-1 to report noise level concerns. Development being done now was permitted prior to the annexation. The City has to honor the permits that were already in process when the annexation took place.
- Residents had concerns about erosion
Residents are noticing an increasing amount of erosion around their neighborhood and it is concerning them. Recently something has changed the water flow and it is running off the hill faster than it used to, eroding sidewalks, hillsides, etc.

The City has put a moratorium on development on the hillsides until they can determine what the current situation is; hillsides are more fragile than the valleys. Mayor Lewis said City staff would come take a look at the situation.

General Questions/Comments

- ***How can we as newly annexed residents get information about what is going on in Auburn?***

In addition to signing up for the Mayor's weekly update, residents were encouraged to check out the City's webpage at www.auburnwa.gov, read the *Auburn Reporter* and if they get cable TV watch Channel 21, where the City provides programming specific to Auburn. Someone said they're still getting King County information on Channel 21. Staff will check with Comcast to make sure they're including the most recently annexed areas in the broadcast area for Auburn's Channel 21.

- ***Cultural Diversity Introduction***

Alexandra Davis gave a short explanation of ways she can assist neighborhoods in her role as Cultural Diversity Liaison, which included, but are not limited to, connecting people interested in multicultural events and groups.

Streets/Sewer/Traffic Related Questions/Comments

- Since they live on a steep hill the residents asked if the City could give them some assistance with getting in and out of their area when it snows and/or is icy. City staff will consider how best they can assist the neighborhood with this situation; i.e. sanding their street or dumping a load of sand at the top of the hill for residents to use.

Public Safety Related Questions/Comments

- ***Parking Enforcement Concerns***

A resident received a parking ticket for parking his vehicle in front of his home, which surprised him; he would have appreciated receiving a warning first since he wasn't aware that wasn't allowed per City Code.

Residents were encouraged to familiarize themselves with the City's parking codes in neighborhoods. The City's Parking Enforcement Officers are actively enforcing the City's parking codes throughout the entire city.

- ***Residents complained about paintballs being shot at their homes and cars.***

Next time you hear them coming, call 9-1-1 immediately.

- ***Auburn's 9-1-1 System***

Residents were encouraged to report everything to 9-1-1. The citizens of Auburn own the 9-1-1 system. You should call 9-1-1 whenever you have an emergency, feel something suspicious is going on, need to speak with an officer or file a report (online reporting is also available http://www.auburnwa.gov/Emergency/Police/Citizen_Online_Police_Reporting.asp if you would prefer to file your report that way). PLEASE NOTE: If calling from a cell phone you need to ask for an "Auburn Call Receiver."

Auburn shares ownership of the 9-1-1 system with other South King County cities and the calls go to a dispatch center so residents shouldn't worry about tying up the phone line when making non-emergency calls. When you call 9-1-1 it will be answered by a "Call Receiver." The Call Receiver will determine whether or not your call is an emergency to be handled right away or to have an officer make contact with you to file a non-emergency report. They will ask questions which are specifically designed to obtain information so that the proper response can be made for your call.

If you want to know what the officer finds out be sure to let the Call Receiver know you DO want to be contacted by the officer when they've completed their investigation. In addition to emergency issues, residents should also call 9-1-1 for non-emergency issues such as street lights out, stop lights out, missing stop signs, fireworks, loose dogs, sewer backups, water leaks, etc. An alternative is to report them via the City website. The link is under Online Services at the top of the page and is called Online Citizen Report (half way down): http://www.auburnwa.gov/Business/public_works/Online_Citizen_Report.asp.

- **37th Street Parking Lot Vehicle Prowls**

Residents reported there have been a lot of vehicle prowls at the 37th Street parking lot by the Interurban Trail at the bottom of the hill. If you park your car there, you'll get broken into; one gentleman's car was broken into seven times. They asked if the City would put a surveillance camera up to help serve as a deterrent.

Mayor encouraged the residents to report it right away when this happens again since he doesn't remember receiving any phone calls or notes about an increase of break ins in that area. Even if you see broken glass, please report it every time.

A lot of the Interurban Trail thefts were connected with some transients who were living in the area; since then a lot of the brush and trees have been cleared out and they've left. We will ask Code Enforcement to check the area again to make sure they haven't come back.

UPDATE: Code Enforcement, Police and Puget Sound Energy partnered to clean up the camp behind the PSE substation, just west of the parking lot. It was checked later and no one had returned to the camp.

- **Residents asked about using surveillance cameras.**

The Mayor pointed out the handout we have on surveillance cameras and said they might want to consider putting up a surveillance camera behind their neighborhood to catch garbage dumpers. The City depends upon the neighborhoods to let us know what's going on and to report it.

- **What is Block Watch?**

Block Watch is built on the concept of neighbors watching out for each other because you know better than anyone else who belongs in your neighborhood and who doesn't. If you think "maybe I should call 9-1-1 about this," you should.

Residents were encouraged to set up a Block Watch; once the group is formed, Community Programs Officer Andy Gould will come out to do the formal training on what to watch for, how to react and how to get neighborhood participation. Groups are encouraged to get together several times a year to maintain an active group. A sign in sheet was passed around and those willing to serve as a Captain were asked to put a "C" by their name. It was mentioned that the Block Watch and Map Your Neighborhood programs go hand-in-hand and will be presented in more detail at the follow up Block Watch meeting.

Mayor talked about National Night Out when the Mayor and Police can stop by to visit with the neighborhood. National Night Out is a potluck, so don't forget to bring food; Mayor and Police bring donuts. We're happy to come whenever you want us; perhaps when your neighborhood has a block party.

UPDATE: A formal Block Watch/Map Your Neighborhood meeting was scheduled and held, establishing an official Block Watch neighborhood. Additionally, a request to street engineering has been made to erect Block Watch signs for the neighborhood.

- ***Residents happy with increased Police presence.***

A resident said she was very impressed with the quick response she received when she called in a pickup truck with broken windows parked on the side of the road. By the end of the day it had already been checked on and tagged as a stolen vehicle.

Other neighbors mentioned that they've never seen as much Police patrol as they have since they've been annexed into the City. They are very happy about it, especially in light of the recent incident that took place at the rental home on their street. Police indicated this community became a project for the District Patrol Officers of this area. When there's a problem with a rental property involved the City has an ordinance with some teeth that can be used.

- ***How do Police combat use of cell phones to alert each other?***

The Department has to get things in place much quicker than they used to. They also use technology to help fight crime.

- ***Does the Police Department hand out tickets to increase revenue instead of dealing with crime and issues that make citizens feel less safe?***

No, our Police Department doesn't hand out tickets as a way to increase revenue. The amount of money that comes back to the City is a formula by the State. Most of the money goes to highways and roads, then the court system; only a small percentage comes back to the City. With the expense it takes in processing citations the City usually loses money.

Auburn has an excellent Police Department; they are one of only 3% of Police Departments that are accredited and have been for 12 years. Ordinances are reviewed for effectiveness all the time, if it's not a good ordinance staff will bring it up to the City Council and have it changed.

- ***What are our rights to protect ourselves if we feel threatened?***

Legally residents can use any force considered necessary to protect yourself; however, Police will never advise anyone to confront another individual.

Police suggested that residents make a safe room in their home with a solid door and deadbolts where there's a phone available to use, guns locked up, etc.

- ***What responsibility does the landlord have when an incident happens in the house they're renting out?***

Within the last six years the City has developed a set of ordinances that give us some tools to deal with problem renters now: Landlords have to have a business license; when Police have to keep coming out there are fines that start kicking in. The process doesn't happen overnight, it's a quiet process because it's a legal process.

- ***When do the "three strikes, you're out" start working?***

It is already in process and implemented when warranted.

- ***Is it helpful to get license plate numbers of vehicles visiting problem houses to the Police?***

Yes, it is very helpful to share as much information as you can with the Police. It may not seem like much is happening at first, but be patient because it takes a while for Police to build a case that will hold up in court.

- ***Do residents need to do anything in particular when they have a house alarm system with a fire alarm built in to it?***

All Auburn residents need to register their alarm systems with the Police Department. Police would like to make carriers of alarm systems more responsible because around 90% of alarm calls are false; this is very wasteful of valuable resources.

- ***Howard Hansen Dam Information***

The Mayor talked about Howard Hansen and the potential for flooding in Auburn. Mayor noted if it floods in Auburn this neighborhood won't be able to get out through Auburn in the valley; you'll have to exit through Federal Way.

- ***How can residents be prepared for emergencies?***

Emergency Preparedness Manager Sarah Miller gave a brief presentation regarding programs citizens can participate in to prepare their homes, families and neighborhoods in case of disaster. Ms. Miller talked about Community Emergency Response Team (CERT); this training is comprised of 24+ hours of classroom education over an eight week period where hands-on practice in topics including first aid, triage and survival skills is taught. Classes are free and basic safety equipment is provided.

Another program discussed was Map Your Neighborhood (MYN). The MYN program helps get neighbors together and meet with purpose; neighbors are taught how to get organized before a disaster happens. Neighborhoods need to be self-organized and willing to meet and share information together as a group.

Generalized disaster preparedness training is also available to interested community groups and organizations. A 90 minute presentation covers general disaster preparedness, community resources and local hazards information.

To schedule any of these classes for your neighborhood, contact the Emergency Preparedness Office at 253-876-1925 or e-mail emergencyprep@auburnwa.gov; you can also visit their website to see a schedule: <http://www.auburnwa.gov/disaster>.

Summary of Solutions Discussed/Action Items

1. M&O will look into adding 63rd Place South to the sanding route or dumping a load of sand at the top of the hill for residents to use as needed during winter conditions.
2. The City will look into the concerns about erosion and suggest ways the neighborhood can deal with it.
3. Code Enforcement will determine if there is still a group of homeless camped near the 37th Street parking lot by Interurban Trail. ***UPDATE: Code Enforcement, Police and Puget Sound Energy partnered to clean up the camp behind the PSE substation, just west of the parking lot. It was checked later and no one had returned to the camp.***
4. Police will look into placement of a surveillance camera in the area around the 37th Street parking lot.
5. Police will schedule a Block Watch/Map Your Neighborhood meeting for the neighborhood. ***UPDATE: A formal Block Watch/Map Your Neighborhood meeting was scheduled and held, establishing an official Block Watch neighborhood. Additionally, a request to street engineering has been made to erect Block Watch signs for the neighborhood.***
6. Community Services will check with Comcast Cable about coverage throughout the recently annexed areas of Auburn.

Community Services Team Contact Information:

- Duanna Richards, Community Services Manager, 253-931-3099 or drichards@auburnwa.gov
- Kirsten Reynolds, Community Services Project Assistant, 253-876-1964, or kreynolds@auburnwa.gov